

Innovative, creative VARK learning styles improvement strategies

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Abstract

Learning styles are different ways of understanding information. There are a lot of models and theories about learning styles one of which is the learning styles of VARK—Visual, Audio, Read/Write and Kinaesthetic. Learners may have diverse mental abilities, affective orientations, motivations and perseverance, but they can all use productive creative strategies. Also, significant research indicates that student self-disclosure plays an important role in the learning experience and producing positive learning outcomes. If student's self-disclosure is based on their learning style, best results can be achieved. The main purpose of this article is to explain a scheme for improving the process of learning. In deeper, learning uses their knowledge and skills in a way that prepare students for real life. So student self-disclosure with using senses according to VARK learning style leads to a deeper learning.

Keywords: Learning styles VARK, self-disclosure, deeper learning, learning style.

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1. Introduction

Dunn, Dunn and Price (1985) define learning styles as a new way how new information is acquired by the individual to develop new skills. The VARK learning style model represents different features of learners' learning, but despite these differences, learners can use all senses to learn, and learning is not limited to a specific sense. Some learners have difficulty choosing the best strategies for a specific task. Sometimes learners have a limited variety of strategies in their repertoire and make use of the first strategy they have chosen even when it does not work. Hence, they may lack confidence in their learning ability and lose motivation in the long run.

In this situation, if teachers know about learning strategies, they can help students to find their own relevant learning styles. They can use a variety of strategies and choose the most efficient ones. When they are well acquainted with their learning styles and strategies, they develop the necessary confidence in their learning ability and become more motivated.

Learners are advised to use Visual, Auditory, Read/Write and Kinaesthetic strategies. Moreover, students have a mixture of learning styles and this affects their achievements. Also recognising learning styles helps teachers to come up with new teaching methods. These strategies show students how to use their different senses and mnemonic devices in an innovative critical manner.

When learners during learning could be relieved of stress and problems, certainly learning become deeper. In other words, education can help learners treat their emotional problems. Externalised soul is not only peace of mind but also it treated them to learn new things better. Self-disclosure is one of the treatment methods that permit individuals to express their feelings. Learning styles not only help students to learn better, but also it helps them have self-disclosure. In other words, student self-disclosure can occur through writing, imagining, feeling and saying.

2. Literature review

Learning Styles are researched since nineteenth century. The early learning research concentrated on the relationship between memory and oral/visual learning methods (Dunn et al., 1985). It was developed by researchers to classify learners based on their approach to perceiving and processing information (Buch & Bartley, 2002). Learning style is basically behavioural approach. It is defined as 'specific behavioural pattern an individual displays in learning' (Campbell, Campbell & Dickinson, 1996).

Kolb (1984) defined it as a process where an individual retains new information and skills. Kolb's theory of learning styles states that knowledge is created through transformation of experiences. But most commonly and widely used learning style is Fleming's VARK (1995). VARK model is one of the most popular representations. Fleming developed an inventory design to help students and others learn more about their individual learning preferences. So if teachers present contents in a style that matches a student's preferred learning style, academic performance and success will improve and promote.

Kara (2009) investigated the hypothesis that a mismatch between teaching style of the teacher and learning styles of the learners results in failure, frustration and demotivation. Hundred second year learners studying in ELT Department and 12 teachers, who were teaching these groups in the year the study was conducted, participated in the study. The results revealed that second-year learners at ELT Department in Anadolu University favoured visual and auditory styles. The teachers also preferred visual and auditory styles. The results showed that learning styles and teaching styles matched at ELT Department.

A study by Sarabdeen (2013) analysed major theories on learning styles and applied one of them to the students in Dubai to understand their various learning styles. The research applied Fleming's VARK

theory through survey conducted among 106 students and the result showed that there were variations in learning preference. Most of the students fell within reader or writer and kinaesthetic categories. The research also confirmed that the students could possibly have more than one learning styles.

A cross-sectional study was conducted by Liew (2015) among randomly selected 419 pre-clinical, undergraduate medical students of the International Medical University in Kuala Lumpur. This study revealed that 343 students (81.9%) had unimodal learning style, whereas the remaining 76 (18.1%) used a multimodal learning style. Among the unimodal learners, a majority (30.1%) were of Kinaesthetic (K) type. Among the middle and high achievers in summative examinations, a majority had unimodal (Kinaesthetic) learning style (30.5%) and were also strategic/deep learners (79.4%).

Self-disclosure has its origins in the fields of sociology and psychology. It was defined as the process when a person becomes known to others, involving the attitude of love and trust (Jourard, 1971). When students reflect their personal struggle or harm, they feel calmness. Also, it impacts the relationship between teacher and student.

Searight's study (2012) showed how to maintain appropriate interpersonal boundaries with writing assignments while encouraging students' psychosocial development.

Matulaitiene (2013) conducted a study to analyse the peculiarities of teacher's self-disclosure and its relation to students' motivation to learn. The literature review has shown that teacher's self-disclosure may be an effective instrument for the teachers to motivate students to learn.

Cayanus in 2009 examined the relation between teacher self-disclosure and student motives to communicate in the classroom. Three dimensions of teacher self-disclosure were studied: amount, relevance and negativity. Results indicated that (a) the teacher self-disclosure dimension of negativity was related to the relational, participatory, excuse-making and sycophancy motives; and (b) the amount and relevance dimensions of teacher self-disclosure were related to the functional and participatory motives.

Deeper learning can be understood as the process through which a person becomes capable of taking what was learned in one situation and applying it to new situations, in other words, learning for transfer (Blanca, 2015, p. 1).

Pellegrino and Hilton (2012) suggest that it may be most productive to future work if they are conceptualised and organised into three broad domains:

1. The cognitive domain, which includes thinking, reasoning and related skills.
2. The intrapersonal domain, which involves self-management, including the ability to regulate one's behaviour and emotions to reach goals.
3. The interpersonal domain, which involves expressing information to others, as well as interpreting others' messages and responding appropriately.

There are six dimensions of deeper learning. These dimensions are:

- Mastery of core academic content.
- Critical thinking and problem solving.
- Collaboration.
- Communication in writing and speaking.
- Self-directed learning.
- Academic mindsets (Blanca, 2015, p. 4).

There are no studies about the role of VARK learning style and self-disclosure in deeper learning. This is the first time that this scheme is used.

3. The role of VARK learning style and self-disclosure in deeper learning

Zull in his book states that different learners enjoy using different parts of brain. Their gifts come naturally from their brain, and they use the parts they enjoy (Zull, 2002, p. 234). Parts of the brain involved in sensory perception. By involving more of the brain during learning, they remember more of what they learn. In VARK learning style, the more the learners use their brain, the more they remember what they learn.

There are four learning styles: Visual, Auditory, Read/Write and Kinaesthetic.

3.1. Visual style

Visual learners learn through what they see. So tools like diagrams, flowcharts, pictures and symbols can be key to understanding new concepts. These learners need to see the teacher's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content of a lesson.

3.2. Auditory style

These individuals learn best through verbal lessons, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Auditory learners interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to the voice tone, pitch and speed. These learners often benefit from reading the text and notes out loud and/or listening to recorded notes and information from texts.

3.3. Read and write style

They pay special attention to textbook glossaries. They learn through just that reading and writing. It is very important to understand the words used in course.

3.4. Kinaesthetic style

Kinaesthetic learners learn best through a hand on approach. Sometimes it can be difficult for individuals with this learning preference to sit still for long periods. Kinaesthetic learners can become distracted by their need for movement and activity.

Learners are advised to use Visual, Audio, Read/Write and Kinaesthetic strategies. Moreover, students have a mixture of learning styles and this affects their achievements. According to this style, we can use self-disclosure story. When they tell a self-disclosure story, others can listen without fear because it is a story about them, not them. And they feel safer. In story they use these styles. For example, students can imagine, tell, feel and write their own story.

4. The importance of story

Storytelling may be the most powerful medicine on earth. Everybody is a narrative, a hero in a novel no one else can write. But students leave their stories untold, and when this happens, they may even feel calmness. It also relaxes your nervous system and helps heal their mind of depression, anxiety, fear, anger and feelings of disconnection.

James Pennebaker findings suggest that the formation of a narrative is an indicator of good mental and physical health. The area of narrative psychology has long held that it is important for people to make sense of events in their lives by putting them into a story-like format (Pennebaker, 1999, p. 1244).

Storytelling allows people to heal deep emotional wounds that have distorted our moral vision and our compassion for others (Johnson, 2011, p. 117). Pennebaker believed that it is important for people to confront their anxieties and problems by creating a story to explain and understand past and current life concerns. A constructed story, then, is a type of knowledge that helps to organise the emotional effects of an experience as well as the experience itself (Pennebaker, 1999, p. 1249). Also storytelling enhances the achievement of vocabulary items.

Self-disclosure story with using learning styles impact on interpersonal, intrapersonal and cognitive skills. They understand weakness and strength themselves. So they can regulate their behaviour and emotions to reach goals. And it is purposeful disclosure of personal information to another person. Also they show how to solve their problems and think critically.

One of the greatest challenges facing educators today is that of engaging a wide and diverse group of students. Students come to the learning experience with different degrees of motivation, commitment, ability and learning styles or approaches. Azriel, Erthal and Starr (2005, p. 9) say 'regardless of age or economic, ethnic or social background, people understand the language of play'. Training games is a good way for learning.

Games offer a medium for students to explore and interrogate information in a fun and interactive way. So teachers can design training games for students.

5. Training games

There are some training games according to VARK learning style and self-disclosure. These games are designed for learning second language. English is supposed as a second language for learning.

5.1. Word game

When new words are taught to students, teachers can play word games to learn better words. Ask them what they mean by, or understand by a given word or concept such as 'snow'. Then divide participants into groups. Give them the prepared handout and say they have 10 or 15 minutes to write words related to 'snow'. They should find words starting with each alphabet.

Now they should imagine a story with words they write. The story can be in the form of an autobiography or even a third-person narrative. The topic may be general emotional concerns, or may be domain specific. Their story is about important experience in their life, even bad or good. They feel and listen sound of story. Then write their stories with new words in second language. After writing, they should read their own story. They will learn new words and grammar in context.

5.1.1. Aims:

- Using visual, Auditory, Read/Write and Kinaesthetic style.
- Self-disclosure story.
- Intrapersonal skills.
- Interpersonal skills.

5.2. Write with non-dominant hand

Vuoksimaa, Koskenvuo, Rose and Kaprio (2009) found that, in Finland, among older age groups, there were fewer left handers than in younger age groups, regardless of whether they were left handed all their life or switched to the left hand in adulthood. It is possible that both hemispheres are involved in controlling complex manual tasks (Teixeira, 2008). A study using 'converted' right handers and natural right handers shows that the sensorimotor area of the left hemisphere of the brain can be

partly switched with training to the non-dominant hand (Kloppel, Vongerichten, van Eimeren, Frackowiak & Siebner, 2007).

When they write with the opposite hand, they become more concentrated. Using their left hand might remind them how they felt when they were first learning to write their name. They will probably feel awkward, but this just means they are teaching their brain a new skill.

Because brain mapping shows that creativity is housed in the right hemisphere of our brains, experts say we can stimulate this right brain through working with our 'wrong' hand. As studies indicate that one hemisphere is active when we use our dominant hand, but both hemispheres are activated when we use our non-dominant hand.

Teachers can choose 10 words that they have thought them already. Write them on the board. And ask learners to look at them for 1 minute. Then erase the whiteboard. Now ask them to write every word they remember with non-dominant hand. It helps them to concentrate on word, learn dictation and better them.

Teachers can ask students the reason for remembering some words. Then divide them in groups, they can make story with words and connect the words together. Again ask them to write their own story with new words and read it in the second language.

5.2.1. Aims:

- Learning styles.
- Cognitive domain.
- Interpersonal skills.
- Intrapersonal skills.
- Self-disclosure story.

5.3. You are part of nature

An imagination of new word is a good way. For example they imagine they are a stone or wind as a part of nature. Then close their eyes and feel it. Write words related to the main word. Write about their feeling with main and related words. When they use their feeling they learn better. Divide in groups and read writing for each other.

5.3.1. Aims:

- Learning styles.
- Cognitive domain.
- Interpersonal skills.
- Intrapersonal skills.
- Self-disclosure.

6. Conclusion

Researchers emphasise that higher education should include attention to students' psychosocial development. Should improve students' abilities to reflect on their communication skills and life choices. Self-disclosure story with learning styles make them learn more styles than they know. They learn lessons, free from anxiety and prepare for real life spontaneously. All of them learn the lesson, because games are based on all four styles not just one of them. Learning is not boring. Students need to develop deeper content knowledge and an ability to apply their knowledge and skills to tasks and situations inside and outside of school. Also student self-disclosure may be one method to use in their classrooms to communicate better with students. Therefore, when teachers utilise them appropriately, learning turns out to be deep, meaningful, retrievable, interesting and creative.

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